Amendments to the Specification

Please REPLACE paragraph [0042] with the following amended paragraph:

[0042] Guards 12, slitter assembly shroud 206, and chopping assembly shroud 426 are provided around the moving parts of the V-cuber to protect operators, to keep unwanted material out of the V-cuber, and to increase the aesthetic appearance of the V-cuber. The slitter shroud 206 is provided with an access panel 208 that allows an operator to gain access to the slitter assembly 2 in order to, for example, perform maintenance. The access panel 208 is pivotally coupled to the slitter shroud 206 by hinge 210 and is held closed both by gravity and by a latch 212. When an operator wishes to gain access to the slitter assembly, the latch 212 is manipulated and the access panel 208 lifted. The chopping assembly shroud 426 is easily removable by simply lifting the shroud 426 vertically upward to completely remove it from the V-cuber.

Please REPLACE paragraph [0047] with the following amended paragraph:

[0047] As best illustrated in FIG. 3, the conveyor assembly 6 further comprises a number of belt support members 604 disposed between the transverse edges of the support structure 601. The belt support members 604 are positioned directly below the surface of the belt 602 to support the belt 602 in a substantially planar condition. It should be reiterated that the belt 602 need not be configured in a substantially planar condition and may be arranged in any desired shape. The belt support members 604 each have a number of recesses 606 formed therein, which are sized

and positioned to accommodate the circular blades 202 of the slitter assembly 2, as will be described in greater detail below in the discussion of the slitter assembly 2. Near the trailing end of the support structure 601 is formed a chopping recess 616 ~~618~~, which is sized to receive a portion of the chopping assembly 4 during the chopping operation, as will also be described in greater detail below in the discussion of the chopping assembly 4.

Please REPLACE paragraph [0048] with the following amended paragraph:

[0048] Referring again to FIG. 2, the slitter assembly 2 is generally comprised of a slitter frame 201, a slitter arm 216 pivotally attached to the slitter frame 201 at the trailing end thereof, and a plurality of slitter shafts 204 rotatably supported by either the slitter frame 201 or the slitter arm 216. In the embodiment of the V-cuber shown, five slitter shafts are used; however, any appropriate number of slitter shafts may be used, depending on the particular application. As shown in FIG. 5, the slitter shafts 204 are designated 204A-E, from the trailing end to the leading end. The slitter shaft 204A is referred to as the trailing slitter shaft, the slitter shaft 204E is referred to as the leading slitter shaft, and the three slitter shafts 204B-D located therebetween are referred to as intermediate slitter shafts. Each of the slitter shafts 204 has at least one circular cutting element or blade 202 rotatably supported thereon. As best shown in FIG. 5, the circular blades 202 are arranged on the slitter shafts 204 in a V shaped arrangement, with the opening end of the V shape oriented toward the leading end of the slitter assembly 2 and the pointed end of the V shape oriented toward the trailing end of the slitter assembly 2. More specifically, a first

pair of circular blades 202 is disposed on the leading slitter shaft 204E and spaced a first distance ~~d1~~ apart (d1 × 2). A second pair of circular blades 202 is disposed on a first of the intermediate slitter shafts 204D and spaced apart a second distance (d2 × 2), which is half the first distance ~~d1~~. A third pair of circular blades 202 is disposed on a second of the intermediate slitter shafts 204C and spaced apart a third distance (d3 × 2), which is half the second distance ~~d2~~. A fourth pair of circular blades 202 is disposed on the third intermediate slitter shaft 204B and spaced apart a fourth distance (d4 × 2), which is half the third distance ~~d3~~. A single central circular blade 202 is disposed such that a plane defined by said central circular blade 202 intersects the midpoint of the first, second, third, and fourth distances ~~d1, d2, d3, and d4~~. Arranged as such, the distance between each circular blade 202 and the next closest circular blade 202 equals d4.

Please REPLACE paragraph [0051] with the following amended paragraph:

[0051] The slitter shafts 204, and hence the circular cutting elements 202, are driven for rotation by an electric slitter drive motor 220, via a slitter gearbox 222. The drive motor 220 is connected to gearbox 222, which transfers power to the slitter shafts 204. In particular, the trailing slitter shaft 204A is coupled to an output shaft of the gearbox 222 ~~224~~ and has sprockets 226a and 226b fixedly attached near each end thereof. The leading slitter shaft 204E has a sprocket 226a fixedly attached to one of its ends (the far end in FIGS. 2 and 4), and is connected to, and driven in synchronism with, the trailing slitter shaft 204A by drive chain or belt 224a which extends around the sprockets 226a fixedly attached to the ends of the leading and trailing

slitter shafts 204E and 204A. The three intermediate slitter shafts 204B-D each have a sprocket 226b fixedly attached to one end (the near end in FIGS, 2 and 4) thereof, and are separately connected to, and driven in synchronism with, the trailing slitter shaft by another drive chain or belt 224b, which extends around and engages the sprockets 226b of slitter shafts 204A-D. The slitter shafts 204A-E are driven by the two separate drive chains or belts 224a and 224b so that the intermediate slitter shafts 204B-D can be easily raised while all of the slitter shafts 204A-E are continuously driven, as best seen in FIG. 4. Chain tensioners 232 are provided on each of the drive belts or chains 224a and 224b to tension the belts or chains 224a and 224b and secure them on the sprockets 226a and 226b.